1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

to the monastery.[1] But to eat an animal so killed wittingly is a sin without remedy and which will be heavily visited in the next reincarnation.

Lamas naturally cannot kill animals nor should they eat them on the same day that they have been killed; these prohibitions, however, do not extend to the lay members of the lama's family. In a house where there are no laymen lamas will call one in to act as a butcher for them; the butcher will get as fee twelve to fourteen lbs. of meat from the crutch of an ox, smaller but similar amounts from a goat or pig, and a drink of *chi* for a chicken. Cattle are usually killed with a bow and arrow, shooting from very near; sometimes they are stoned or killed with a pointed knife. Pigs and goats are killed with a pointed knife if there is one, otherwise with a piece of sharpened bamboo. Chickens are usually knocked on the head. Boys above the age of ten can kill chickens and goats, and pigs after fifteen; but only a completely potent person will have the courage to kill an ox.

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With small exceptions the land and animals are considered to be the property of the householder, in whose name the house is registered and who is responsible for the payment of taxes. This householder is usually the oldest man in the prime of life in the family; a grandfather who has living sons usually gives the control in his life time over to his eldest son. In theory the property descends from elder to younger brother, and then, when all of the first generation are dead or too old, to the sons of the elder brother. In point of fact it is seldom that there is more than one family of each generation in one household; if the group becomes over-large the sons usually set up house on their own. If a son wishes to set up on his own during his father's life time, the father assigns to him, with the consent and co-operation of the Mandal and *youmi*[1] his proportionate share of the land. If when the father is dead the sons wish to separate the property is divided by the Mandal, *youmi*, and *gyapŏn*. The house is given to the eldest son, the animals and movable property divided up equally; the land is also divided up equally, the eldest son having the first choice and, if there is difference in the size of the fields, the biggest fields. In the event of the number of fields not being exactly divisible by the number

[1] *Youmi* and *gyapŏn* are village officials: for further explanation see Chapter Five, p. 131.

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dead man's soul on its journey through the other worlds after death. The Dorjé Lapoon are supposed to have renounced the things of this world; they are meant to be without property and to renounce such as they do possess; their nourishment is meant to be looked after by the other villagers; and, since they are meant to be fairly ascetic, it is expected that the Dorjé Lapoon will feast the other lamas yearly on their superfluity. Both *omzet* and Dorjé Lapoon can perform the mystic ceremony of *kong-so klon*: this ceremony, performed fasting in a dark room to make up for arrears of duties left undone and to appease the devils in the neighbourhood, is believed to be fraught with considerable danger which would result in the death of anybody not properly qualified who tried to perform it. The rank of *omzet* corresponds fairly closely to that of bishop; but as far as I know there is no equivalent in the Christian hierarchy to the rank of Dorjé Lapoon.

There are about twenty lamas attached to the monastery of Lingthem; eleven live permanently in the village, two others more or less permanently; the rest live in neighbouring villages. The two Dorjé Lapoon are the father of Datoop and the 'big father' of Tafoor; they are always addressed and referred to by their title. Tafoor and Ongden are *omzet*, Tafoor being by far the more learned; Datoop is *chichembu*, Lumba *chithembu*, Jiroong *chéné*, Chudo and Pembu *kané*, Chanko (Ongden's eldest son), Chano and Takal *chapti-bu*. All the *tongpeun-bu* live in the neighbouring villages. Chano and Takal are both full-grown men—Chano is thirty and Takal fifty-seven—but they are both too stupid to rise above the lowest rank. There are four boys studying to become lamas: they are Lumba's eldest son Kutt'r, aged eighteen, Tafoor's eldest son Chimpet, aged fourteen, Chano's eldest 'son' Mikmar, aged thirteen, and Chudo's eldest son aged four. The last named has not yet started to learn to read, but he is dressed in lama's clothes, and he plays on the floor at conducting services; this is considered to be a most auspicious omen, and when he does start studying he should learn quickly and easily.

Corresponding with the hierarchy of lamas there is a hierarchy of nuns (*in-é-bu*). Each rise in grade carries the same validating feast of a load of *chi*, 40 lbs. of grain and ten lbs. of oil or butter. The titles are similar, but they are completely pointless. Nuns cannot conduct ceremonies or perform exorcisms; in a very few of the lama's services, chiefly those connected with death, they have a subordinate role. There is no sort of compulsion or prophetic

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

792 horoscope which forces a woman to become a nun; the duties are undertaken through individual piety, though it would seem as though the influence of father or husband was preponderating; of the nine nuns in Lingthem six were the wives or daughters of lamas: the other three were the wives of laymen who came from distant villages and I did not find out the positions of their fathers. A nun can start to study at any time between marriage and old age, taking as a teacher either a lama or the Dorjé Lapoon or *omzet* nun. Literacy is not insisted on for nuns and by far the greater number are in fact illiterate; the worship of nuns consists in the turning of prayer-wheels and the chanting of *mantra*. From such information as I can obtain nuns play a very small rôle in other Sikkim monasteries; and I suspect that the organisation prevailing in Lingthem is a Lepcha elaboration designed to give equal opportunity to men and women, since the Lepchas have a tendency not to disqualify anybody from any pursuit on account of sex.

Owing to the personality of the holder one exception must be made to the generalisation that the nuns' grades are meaningless. Mrs. Datoop was *inébu chithembu* and she showed that she would be well able to wield the *pankar* if necessary. Men say that they would be ashamed to be beaten by a woman, but they would not be able to protest.

The nuns are meant to spend three days every month at the monastery, worshipping by circumambulating the monastery turning their hand prayer-wheels and chanting *Om! mani pudme hum!* and sitting in the *lha-gong* turning the big wheels to the accompaniment of the same chant. These visits take place on the 9th of the Tibetan month in honour of Chérézé, on the 14th in honour of Zobu Sangé Chumdendé, and on the 31st in honour of Guru Rimpuché. Little attention is paid to these festivals and often only two or three nuns turn up. Unlike the lamas, whose conduct is not so controlled, the nuns have to observe certain prohibitions; on the eve of a monastery visit they must not eat an evening meal nor copulate with their husbands; and on the day of the visit they must avoid eating meat and drinking *chi*. Most of the nuns, and all the more pious ones, were old women.

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793 The duties and devotions of lamas can be divided into three categories: personal and individual devotions, set monthly and

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

lights; grain and flowers are also offered to the gods from time to time.

On either side of the altar are pigeon-holes, in which the 222 volumes of the Teng-gyur (the great Commentary on the Lamaist Scriptures) are stored, the actual scripture itself, the Kang-gyur as it is called (108 volumes), being stored in the upstairs room which we used as a bedroom. There are no chairs in the monastery, the Lamas* (here called Yukman) sitting cross-legged on planks on the floor, which are arranged in two lines running at right angles to the altar. The head Lama, or Dorje Lopön, has a rough sort of seat on which he, too, sits cross-legged. This, however, is raised a little above the level of the floor.

The main hall takes up most of the ground floor, but at one end there is a room, only about nine feet wide, which in addition to a small altar, complete with image, houses three enormous prayer-drums, which ring a bell each time they are turned completely round. These drums, or perhaps barrels would be a better word, are about ten feet high, and each is completely filled with strips of paper on which the magic formula *Om mane padme hum* has been written over and over again. One turn of the drum is equivalent to uttering this mystic sentence the same number of times that it has been written on the paper within. When one has nothing better to do, therefore, a quiet half-hour of turning a giant prayer-wheel is as good a means of acquiring merit as any other. People would often drop in at odd moments to do this.

The largest of the three drums had a rather elaborate top that projected through the ceiling into a small room above, which we used as a bathroom. This top was decorated with a muslin flounce of red, blue, and yellow and looked something like a rather dirty ballet skirt. When the drum was turned

*The term Lama should rightly only be applied to a monk who has reached a certain definite standing in the Buddhist church by reason of his learning and piety. It is extremely doubtful if anyone in Lingtem has any claim to this title; but since the term is commonly, though quite incorrectly, used by most Western writers to denote any Lamaist monk, and since the Lepchas themselves use it in this way, I have decided to follow the general practice.

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from below the top would also revolve; and if one happened to be having a bath at the same time the effect was rather startling until we grew accustomed to expect it. A flange projected from the rim of the drum, and this struck a bell at every turn, thus enabling the worshipper to keep a count, for it would be unwise to finish with an inauspicious number. It had a tinkling sound like the bell in a village shop; and I had only to hear it to be immediately transported to the English countryside.

The upper storey was reached by an outside staircase and contained three rooms. The largest was more or less identical with the main hall below, and also contained an altar, complete with images and books. There were also several fearsome-looking masks, said to represent Lord Konchen, which were used for dances. This room was used as a general store-room: in one corner were a number of printing blocks and apparatus for making paper, also odds and ends of ceremonial equipment, coloured umbrellas, peacocks' feathers, and such-like. Some of the pillars were roughly carved, and decorated with crudely coloured dragon designs. The ceiling was unplastered, and on the beams above a number of immense copper vessels and cooking pots were stored. This was our bedroom, and it always reminded me of the backstage of a theatre set for a Christmas pantomime. It would never have surprised me to see a *Corps de Ballet* come tripping into the room; and when the light was put out the last thing one saw, before dropping off to sleep, was the gilded face of the large central Buddha faintly gleaming in the light of the flickering wick. In the morning we would usually awake to the pattering sound of a bare-footed novice, whose duty it was to refill the seven altar-bowls with water.

There was another small room, little bigger than a cell, which was used by certain monks for the purpose of private meditation. It was only about nine feet square, and its solitary window was heavily swathed in sacking, so as to exclude every particle of light. From time to time one

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special Lama would come and meditate alone in this completely darkened room. He would sometimes intone for hours at a stretch, accompanying his prayers on the cymbals and drum. After several hours of this rhythmical banging one's nerves would come near to breaking point. The only thing then was to go for a solitary walk. This particular form of devotion is known as *Kongso Klong*, or the "sending away of Devils," and this was the name we eventually gave to its chief exponent. I later discovered that our presence in the monastery was thought to call for redoubled efforts in this direction, but I was not prepared for what happened on the day of my final departure. On this occasion Kongso Klong appeared before me with the usual present of eggs. I thought he had merely come to say good-bye, and was somewhat astonished when the others told me that he demanded ten rupees "for services rendered." This I paid.

Between the Kongso room and our bedroom was a short passage, which contained a large open fire-place for cooking. This was identical with that in the ordinary living house, but during our time it was never used. For dining-room we had a tent. This was pitched outside the small house adjoining the monastery, which served both as kitchen and living quarters for our servants. It was normally occupied by Pong Ring, a snuffling old gentleman and almost blind. He was a sort of verger and was supposed to keep the monastery clean and to tend its tiny garden. All this, however, was far beyond him and he seldom appeared. Sometimes on sunny days he would drag himself painfully down and would totter senilely round the building, at the same time turning his prayer-wheel and wheezing like a pug. When he felt up to it he would take a turn at the giant drums and his accompanying prayers sounded to me like the swarming of bees. Everyone treated him kindly; but the poor old man had outlived his time. He said he had once had a wife, but never a child to look after him in his extreme old age. Sometimes, when we were talking to others, he would pause in his circumambulations and stare

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though walking about was almost as difficult as on a swinging suspension-bridge. At last we were by ourselves; there was no communication between the two rooms except from the outside, but there were so many chinks in the walls that we thought it advisable to improvise a screen with our rugs and shawls, and then we were able to change our wet clothes and hang them on the many bamboos crossed above the fireplace to be dried and well smoked! We were not a little horrified to find that our feet and ankles were covered with leeches. I got off fairly well, but my husband, who had walked nearly all day, had at least twenty on him. I had knocked two off his neck before, and now he found one in his hair. When empty their bodies were like long black threads about the thickness of vermicelli, but when full of blood they were huge, soft, black lumps. It was most repulsive to have them taken off one. These hill-leeches are much smaller and darker in colour than the domestic leech, but the bite must be poisonous in some way, for, although not felt at the time, they cause considerable irritation of the skin for many weeks afterwards."

Ibid.

Monasteries.

"There is a great similarity in all these buildings, but the Pemiongchi *goompa* is larger than most of them, though the outside seemed less interesting to us, because it had a corrugated iron roof. There were also common glass window-panes round one of the altars. Inside was a great wealth of ugly idols and hideous masks, and it was painful to see our Nepalese coolie prostrating himself with awed face before the latter. Some of the frescoes on the walls were particularly gaudy and revolting; the lamas we saw here were of a low order, and had not the attractive faces we had sometimes met with among these Buddhist priests. To add to the generally unfavourable opinion we had received, some cooking vessels carried by Teptook, and which he had respectfully left at the door when he went in, were stolen,

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792 and neither threats nor baksheesh would induce the guilty one to return them.

"The name of the monastery signifies 'the sublime and perfect lotus!' It seemed rather a den of corruption and degradation, and it was with infinite relief that we turned from the ugliness devised by man to the perfect beauty of the surrounding scene."

Ibid.

An attraction for the animal lover.

000 "The Talung monastery has a Llama [*sic*] permanently in charge who will make travellers welcome at his lonely abode."

Tours in Sikkim.

671 *Some extracts from the Sixteen Laws of Sikkim:* said to be founded on those spoken by Raja Melong-dong, who is believed to have lived in India before the time of Buddha (approx. 900 B.C.). They are said to apply "only to such uncivilised people as Bhuteas, Lepchas, and Mongolians, who know no law":

Instructions for those who are being defeated and cannot fight.

671 726 "When a fort is surrounded those inside should remain quiet and should show no fear. They should not fire off their arms uselessly, with no hope of hitting the enemy. The well within the fort should be most carefully guarded. Those within the fort should not be allowed to communicate with the enemy for fear of treachery. They must not be lazy. Until peace is declared the messenger should receive no reward.

671 727 "Should you be defeated, you must give up your arms, and those who give them up must not be killed. Should anyone kill a man who has given up his arms he must be derided and scoffed at as a coward.

"If during the conflict you capture a general or officer of rank, you should bind his hands in front with a silken

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Lingtem Monastery.

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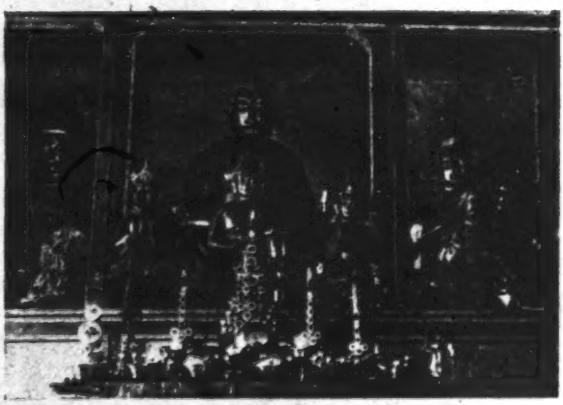

Images in the main room of the monastery. On the table in front is a complete offering, consisting of *tormas*, bowls of grain and water, lamps, etc., prepared for the monthly worship of Kinchinjunga. The large central figure represents Padma Sambhava, generally known as Guru Rimpoche.

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Lamas dedicating the offering to Kinchinjunga. The woman standing in front of the altar has come in to serve the Lamas with *chi*.

[Facing p. 72]

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but the general effect in the gloomy rooms of a semi-darkened monastery is often not unpleasing.

Apart from its actual built-in decoration every monastery has a few hanging wall-pictures, or *Thang-Ka* as they are called. These are generally painted on canvas or cotton, which is first prepared by stretching it while damp over a wooden frame, from which it is detached when completed. The mounted Tibetan painting generally has a tricoloured silk border usually of red, yellow and blue. According to Waddell this "is alleged to represent the spectrum colours of the rainbow, which separates sacred objects from the material world. The outer border of blue is broader than the others, and broadest at its lowest border, where it is usually divided by a vertical patch of brocade embroidered with the dragons of the sky. A veil is invariably added as a protection against the grimy smoke of incense, lamps and dust. The veil is of flimsy silk, often adorned with sacred symbols, and it is hooked up when the picture is exhibited." There were several such pictures in our room at Lingtem, but all were of very inferior quality, and in no way to be compared with some of the really beautiful works of art one often sees in Tibetan monasteries.

* * * * *

I started this chapter with an account of the local Church's leader, and it seems fitting to close it with a few details about the head of the civil administration. Chala Mandal is fifty-nine, but like most Lepchas does not look his age, and would never believe that he was nearly twenty years my senior. He has been ill for several weeks, and does not often leave his house. It was divined that his trouble comes from Subdok Mung. It appears that the Mandal's first wife was a Mun, and that when she died her body, instead of being buried, was cremated, a rite that is usually accorded only to members of the Church. The burial ceremonies were carried out by Lamas, no Mun, which was not in accordance with custom, being present. For this reason her soul was angry, and

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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During the prayer, the one who performed the sacrifice added the expression "lang nam" in chosen places; it means "the year of the bull," because the sick person was born in the year of the bull. Lang is the Tibetan expression for the Zodiac bull. As the prayer ended, the assistant took some of the sacrificial meat, rice and chi and offered it to Me-sum-mung, the demon who represents the life-principle.

And so the sacrifice came to an end. The portions of meat were cleared away. The fore and hind legs and the valuable parts were given to the priest. The remainder of the meat, as also the skin, were sold in order to enable the family to make a little money. A very small portion of the meat was eaten immediately after the sacrifice. These sacrifices involve a heavy expenditure for the family; often many sacrifices are offered for the same illness if it is protracted, and this causes the ruin of many people. Hence many prefer to invite the lamaistic monks of the Brug-pa sect, because they are willing to drive out demons of illness at lesser expense.

A female Mun, Mai-li-mo-la-dza-ni, whose personal name is Chin-dün, and who lives near Git-biyong described a similar sacrificial ceremony to us which she holds at the ripening of the millet crop. The preparatory arrangements for the sacrifice are the same as mentioned above, with the following differences: There are only five Tormas for the five deities namely: Sa-dzug-rum, the sun god who is regarded as the Supreme Being, Ni-gung-mön, his wife, Ta-dik-köb, the son, Nyom, the daughter-in-law, and San-tug-kan-dro-mu. There are again two lamps, but five bamboo containers containing chi, five banana leaves with rice, five varieties of meat, and incense, and holy water containers. She is helped by her personal spirits who are Darmit, Dartik, Sang-mu, Dang-mu-rum, Asog-rum, Tzang-rum. The sacrifice progresses in the same sequence as above. This Mun was twenty years old when she fell ill with heart trouble. The Bong-thing A-du said to her, "You must become Mun." She was an apprentice to the female Mun Dja-ge-mo. In addition to her Mun belief, she also practises Lamaism, and has a little prayer wheel and prayer cord. We could not obtain the text of the prayers used in her sacrifice.